From the May Fourth Movement to Communist Revolution
Guo Moruo and the Chinese Path to Communism
Xiaoming Chen

Using the life and work of influential Chinese writer Guo Moruo (1892–1978), reflects on China’s encounters with modernity, Communism, and capitalism.

Why did China’s intellectuals turn to Communism? Reflecting on China’s encounters with modernity, Communism, and capitalism, Xiaoming Chen offers an explanation by using as a case study the life and work of influential Chinese writer Guo Moruo (1892–1978). Guo was dedicated to the May Fourth Movement, which sought to bring reform, republicanism, and modern Western ideas to China, but abandoned these ideals for Communism in the mid-1920s. While the hope of national salvation was a major factor in Guo’s conversion, Chen suggests other reasons, including a desire to save the whole world, a goal that was consistent with the traditional Confucian call to not only “manage the state” but also “harmonize the world.” Chen also argues that despite the collectivist and totalitarian outcome of the Chinese Communist movement, Marx’s initial promise of ultimate individual emancipation served as a major attraction to intellectuals like Guo, who came to view Marxist Communism as the most efficient and thorough way to fulfill their dream of individual freedom.

The book covers Guo’s intellectual and personal transitions, how the fight against the Confucian family system became the Marxist emancipation of the individual from capitalism, and how the Confucian struggle against sexual desire ceded to a struggle against material desires. The various combinations of Western and Confucian thought that Guo adopted ultimately led to a synthesis of Confucianism and Marxism-Leninism.

“Now that the Communist revolution has proven to be a failure, it is worthwhile to reexamine the way in which intellectuals of the early twentieth century became enamored with Communism. This book … addresses a very valid and central question for historians of the twentieth century, particularly in Chinese history.” — Stephen Uhalley Jr., author of A History of the Chinese Communist Party

Xiaoming Chen is Associate Professor of History at Ohio Wesleyan University.

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Asian Studies

The Politics of Mourning in Early China
Miranda Brown

Looks at mourning practices during the Han dynasty to reassess whether filial piety was the overriding model for society and governance in early China.

The Politics of Mourning in Early China reevaluates the longstanding assumptions about early imperial political culture. According to most explanations, filial piety served as the linchpin of the social and political order, as all political relations were a seamless extension of the relationship between father and son—a relationship that was hierarchical, paternalistic, and personal. Offering a new perspective on the mourning practices and funerary monuments of the Han dynasty, Miranda Brown asks whether the early imperial elite did in fact imagine political participation solely along the lines of the father-son relationship or whether there were alternative visions of political association. The early imperial elite held remarkably varied and contradictory beliefs about political life, and they had multiple templates and changing scripts for political action. This book documents and explains such diversity and variation and shows that the Han dynasty practice of mourning expressed many visions of political life, visions that left lasting legacies.

“Brown’s book is a careful study that masterfully engages its sources: commemorative inscriptions of the Eastern Han dynasty. Not content to accept previous generalizations about these sources, she rereads them with a critical eye and shows that Eastern Han men had a much broader conception of political association and service than previously thought. By looking closely at Eastern Han epitaphs and not being beholden to any previous assumptions about them, Brown successfully throws doubt on many conventional explanations of these documents.” — Keith Nathaniel Knapp, author of Selfless Offspring: Filial Children and Social Order in Medieval China

Miranda Brown is Assistant Professor of Asian Languages and Cultures at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. She is the coauthor (with Conrad Schirokauer) of A Brief History of Chinese Civilization, Second Edition.

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THE ENCOUNTER NEVER ENDS
A Return to the Field of Tamil Rituals
ISABELLE CLARK-DECÈS

A reconsideration of the relationship between fieldwork and anthropological knowledge.

The Encounter Never Ends offers a thoughtful meditation on the relationship between fieldwork and anthropological knowledge through the analysis of Tamil ritual practice in a South Indian village. Isabelle Clark-Decès revisits field notes taken more than fifteen years earlier, and reveals what she intended when she took the notes, what she came to understand and record, and why she proceeded to ignore her ethnography until recently. Returning to these notes with fresh eyes and matured experience, Clark-Decès gains insight into Tamil rural society that complicates anthropological analyses of the Indian village. She realizes that the village she lived in was neither a community nor a “system” but rather a loose hodgepodge of caste groups and advises that the social order is not necessarily the best place to start looking for important insights into the ways in which cultures construe ritual action. Drawing on the recent work of Don Handelman to discuss the two Tamil ritual complexes recovered from her field notes, a drought “removal” ritual and a post-funeral ceremony, the author shows how they articulate complex notions regarding knowledge, reflexivity, and action. Throughout, the author shares her own story, including the mixture of frustration and fascination she felt while conducting fieldwork, illustrating how extraordinarily difficult ethnographic description is.

“This is a fascinating excursion into reflexive anthropology.” — Anne Mackenzie Pearson, author of “Because It Gives Me Peace of Mind”: Ritual Fasts in the Religious Lives of Hindu Women

ISABELLE CLARK-DECÈS is Associate Professor of Anthropology at Princeton University and the author of No One Cries for the Dead: Tamil Dirges, Rowdy Songs, and Graveyard Petitions and Religion Against the Self: An Ethnography of Tamil Rituals.

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THE TALENT OF SHU
Qiao Zhou and the Intellectual World of Early Medieval Sichuan
J. MICHAEL FARMER

Presents the intellectual world of early medieval Sichuan through a critical biography of historian and classicist Qiao Zhou.

The Talent of Shu reconstructs the intellectual world of early medieval Sichuan through a critical biography of Qiao Zhou, a noted classicist, historian, and official of Shu-Han. Countering conceptions of Sichuan as an intellectual backwater, author J. Michael Farmer provides an analytical narrative history of the significant intellectual and scholarly activity in the region during the late second through third centuries CE.

Qiao Zhou stands as an apt figure to represent the intellectual world of third-century Sichuan. An heir to a long-standing regional intellectual tradition, he was trained in political prophesy, canonical studies, and ancient history, and in true Confucian fashion, employed these skills in the service of the state. While some of Qiao’s scholarship, as well as his political engagement, was conservative, he also stands as an innovator in the fields of canonical and historical criticism and local history. As such, he embodies not only the scholarly tradition of Sichuan, but also the intellectual transitions of the age.

“This book is crisply written, meticulously researched, and comprehensive. The author astutely draws material from a wide range of sources and threads them into a single, coherent narrative, along the way making reasonable connections and offering interesting conclusions.” — Charles Holcombe, author of The Genesis of East Asia, 221 B.C.–A.D. 907

J. MICHAEL FARMER is Assistant Professor of History at Brigham Young University.

A volume in the SUNY series in Chinese Philosophy and Culture
Roger T. Ames, editor

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How perceptions of land and space influence social and aesthetic conditions in the Tamil region of India.

This interdisciplinary work explores how people in the Tamil region of India think about space and land, and how this, in turn, influences the creation of the social and aesthetic world they live in. Contributors focus on the notion of geography in its strictest sense, on verbal descriptions of land and space and how these descriptions build and inform diverse social and aesthetic realities. The essays examine “texts” drawn from a range of time periods and a variety of sources in Tamil culture, including imaginative literature, historical events and narratives, religious rituals, and daily life in contemporary Tamil Nadu. The book clearly demonstrates the ways in which early Tamil aesthetic and linguistic paradigms have survived to shape and construct.

“This excellent book represents an important contribution to the cultural constructions of space. Through a series of reflections on ways in which people of Tamil Nadu have conceptualized and created and enacted space, over a long period of roughly two millennia, the volume offers a vivid longitudinal portrait based in one particular cultural region.” — Richard H. Davis, Bard College

Martha Ann Selby, editor

Tamil Geographies
Cultural Constructions of Space and Place in South India
Indira Viswanathan Peterson, editors

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THE FALL OF THE INDIGO JACKAL
The Discourse of Division and Pûrṇabhadra’s Pañcatantra
McComas Taylor

Contemporary critical theory is brought to the consideration of caste in the Pañcatantra, one of the best-known cycles of Indian tales.

Every child growing up in India knows the story of the jackal who fell into the vat of blue dye, and discovering the power of his majestic new appearance, declared himself king of the forest. In spite of his pretenses, the jackal, eventually betrayed by his own instincts, was set upon by the other animals. This and many similar narratives are found in the Pañcatantra, the collection of Sanskrit tales for children compiled by a Jaina monk named Pûrṇabhadra in 1199 CE.

In this book, McComas Taylor looks at the discourses that give shape and structure to the fall of the indigo jackal and the other tales within the Pañcatantra. The work’s fictional metasociety of animals, kings, and laundrymen are divided according to their jāti, or “kind.” This discourse of caste holds that individuals’ essential natures, statuses, and social circles are all determined by their birth. Taylor applies contemporary critical theory developed by Foucault, Bourdieu, Barthes, and others to show how these ideas are related to other Sanskrit master-texts, and describes the “regime of truth” that provides validation for the discourse of division.

“This is a fine piece of scholarship. Nothing like this exists for the Indian folklore tradition. McComas Taylor presents the multifaceted significance of the Pañcatantra, which is possibly the most popular book within India. The stories from this collection spread across the world, so this book is also significant for the global study of folktales.” — Patrick Olivelle, translator and editor of The Pañcatantra: The Book of India’s Folk Wisdom

McComas Taylor is Head of the South Asia Centre, Faculty of Asian Studies at the Australian National University.

JULY | 224 pp
$65.00 hc 978-0-7914-7177-7
JOINING THE GLOBAL PUBLIC
Word, Image, and City in Early Chinese Newspapers, 1870–1910
RUDOLF G. WAGNER, EDITOR

Explores the early Chinese press, which emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and its impact on China’s modernization.

Joining the Global Public examines early Chinese-language newspapers and analyzes their impact on China’s modernization. Exploring a range of media such as regular dailies, illustrated weeklies, and entertainment papers, contributors look at factors that influenced the nature of these publications, including foreign models, foreign managers, and a first generation of Chinese journalists, editorialists, and “newspainters.” With analyses demonstrating how the growth of popular media would enable China to join the global public, contributors also examine the impact of inserting an alien medium—a newspaper—into a Chinese universe and note the spread of new attitudes and values as entertainment papers filled the space of a newly created urban leisure. A superb and pioneering documentation of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Chinese-language media, Joining the Global Public serves as an introduction to this important yet little-studied part of China’s modernization.

“This book is extraordinarily interesting to read and the most fascinating work on Chinese history I have read in quite some time. Contributors keep coming back to the much-discussed issue of a Chinese ‘public sphere,’ but avoid the mechanical consideration of this question that dominates the recent literature. Instead, we get a very wide range of insights into matters of cultural, political, and social change, as signified in the pages of the journals under study.” — William T. Rowe, author of Crimson Rain: Seven Centuries of Violence in a Chinese County

RUDOLF G. WAGNER is Professor of Chinese Studies at the University of Heidelberg and the author or editor of many books, including A Chinese Reading of the Daodejing: Wang Bi’s Commentary on the Laozi with Critical Text and Translation, also published by SUNY Press.

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